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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 KUWAIT 001348

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STATE FOR NEA/ARP AND PM

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#) [KU](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR ADMIRAL FALLON'S SEPTEMBER 24
VISIT TO KUWAIT

REF: A. KUWAIT 1101

[1](#)B. KUWAIT 873

[1](#)C. KUWAIT 427

Classified By: CDA Misenheimer for reasons 1.4 b and d

Welcome

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Your visit is timely as it comes on the heels of the highly successful SECDEF visit of 1 August. We are requesting meetings for you with Amir Shaykh Sabah Al Sabah, Crown Prince Shaykh Nawaf Al Sabah, Prime Minister Shaykh Nasser Mohammed Al Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister, and Interior Minister Shaykh Jaber Mubarak Al Sabah, and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al Sabah. Our Office of Military Cooperation-Kuwait (OMC-K) is also requesting a meeting with Kuwait Armed Forces Chief of Staff LTG Fahad Al-Amir. The meetings are likely to focus on Iraq, Iran, and issues related to U.S.-Kuwait strategic ties.

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Kuwaitis highly value their relationship with the U.S., and few adult Kuwaitis have forgotten or fail to appreciate the U.S.-led liberation of their country. Nevertheless, in terms of regional issues, the Kuwaiti leadership sometimes feels taken for granted and its friendship undervalued by the U.S. Kuwait understands its security needs are best met by a strong, strategic relationship with the United States but do not hesitate to signal their dissatisfaction with what they perceive as being taken for granted. The August SECDEF visit went a long way in demonstrating our commitment to the Kuwaitis and confirmed that we value their support. Our conversations with military contacts indicate that regular high-level visits, such as yours, would convey to the Kuwaitis that they are indeed valuable partners and respected for their efforts to support the global war on terror. They would welcome further expressions of appreciation for their support and reassurances of the U.S. commitment to its long-term strategic relationship with Kuwait, as well as opportunities to consult with us on next steps on Iraq.

Recap of April 3 visit

[1](#)3. (S/NF) In your last visit, you discussed Iraq, Iran and bilateral military cooperation with the Amir of Kuwait, the Prime Minister, Defense Minister and Armed Forces Chief of

Staff. The Government of Kuwait (GOK) message on Iraq was one of continued support for U.S. and Iraqi efforts to increase stability in Iraq. The GOK officials told you that Iraqis must shoulder responsibility to solve the security problem and Iraqi leaders must bridge their differences to find a way to cooperate at a political level.

14. (S/NF) During your visit, the Chief of Staff noted that military training exercises with the U.S. had been decreasing. You told him that you would like to hear more about Kuwait's training needs, and hoped to return training levels to a higher level, but the near-term reality would likely involve more sea and air training than land forces training.

Military Cooperation

15. (S/NF) Historically, the relationship between the U.S. and Kuwait military has been strong, often characterized as "brothers in arms." This relationship has been nurtured and sustained by the long-term, daily interface of OMC-K personnel at all levels with their Kuwaiti counterparts; efforts by the Defense Attach Office to improve intelligence sharing; and the extensive efforts by ARCENT to cultivate and maintain relationships, jointly implement the Defense Cooperative Agreement, and serve as good tenants within a host country. As former Ambassador LeBaron noted in his end of tour report, we reap benefits in our bilateral relationship "through sustained dialogue at all levels, masterful management of troop and equipment flows, and an effective military sales and advisory program." (ref A) Even though unable to meet with the Amir and the Kuwait Armed

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Forces Chief of Staff due to their travels, or the Minister of Defense due to his unexpected health situation, the SecDef powerfully reinforced this long standing relationship during his visit last month.

16. (S/NF) The bilateral relationship at the strategic level remains solid, and the United States and Kuwait held their most recent Gulf Security Dialogue (GSD) on May 22 to coordinate policy on regional security and political issues (see ref B). At the tactical level there continues to be concern regarding the lack of joint U.S.-Kuwait ground force training opportunities. Prior to the launch of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the U.S. maintained a rotational battalion or brigade in Kuwait that trained with Kuwaiti forces. Now, however, the combined U.S.-Kuwaiti exercise program is highlighted by Patriot missile training with Kuwaiti forces. OMC-K and DATT officers report continued strong interest by Kuwaitis at all levels to train with U.S. forces. Frustrating this interest may further undercut our relations and cause the Kuwaiti military to look elsewhere for training partners. Media reports announcing a major Kuwait/French military exercise in 2009 is an example.

Government-Parliament Tensions

17. (S/NF) Since your April visit tensions between the Government and National Assembly have remained high, with the Parliament seeking an expanded role in the decision-making process and continuing the grilling of Cabinet members. The new Health Minister (and one of only two female ministers) appointed in the March Cabinet reshuffle was compelled to resign in August after a hospital fire that killed two and injured 19, for which she was unfairly scapegoated. MPs have threatened to grill several other ministers when Parliament reconvenes this fall. However this political impasse plays out, Kuwait's relations with the U.S. are unlikely to be directly affected. Our key interlocutors on military matters did not change in the Cabinet re-shuffle. Kuwait's leadership is strongly committed to maintaining good relations with the U.S. and most Kuwaitis, including

even many Islamists, view a long-term strategic relationship with the U.S. as both beneficial and necessary.

Iran

¶8. (S/NF) While Kuwait's leadership remains hesitant to confront Iran publicly, the issue is on top of their security agenda and reportedly dominated the informal GCC summit discussions in Riyadh on May 15. Kuwaiti officials have been increasingly vocal in calling for Iranian compliance with recent UN Security Council Resolutions and, at the same time, in expressing their concerns about the possibility of a conflict between the US and Iran. Local media reports have played up the likelihood and stoked Kuwaiti fears that such a conflict is imminent and inevitable. Discussions with senior Kuwaiti military leadership often commence with a request for status on the situation in Iraq followed by the question: "When is the U.S. going to attack Iran?"

Heightened Security Awareness

¶9. (S/NF) Kuwaitis are keenly aware of the current international debate about Iran's intentions. Since your April visit, Kuwait held its first military parade in more than 25 years, approved the deployment of two U.S. Patriot missile batteries at the main U.S. military base in Kuwait and hosted two separate USG teams to assess the country's Critical Energy Infrastructure recommendations and to strengthen Kuwaiti security. Kuwaitis are also concerned about the perceived deterioration of the situation in southern Iraq, the potential for spillover into Kuwait, and possible Iranian influences on Kuwait's minority Shi'a population.

Guantanamo

¶10. (S/NF) Four Kuwaiti detainees remain at Guantanamo. Their cases are more sensitive than those of the eight

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Kuwaitis already released. The Amir has sent two letters to the President assuring that Kuwait would try the four remaining detainees and monitor them if found not guilty. The USG has judged the Amir's assurances to be unsatisfactory because of their lack of specificity, and has conveyed this message to the GOK, most recently during the August 1-2 visit of SecDef. Your interlocutors will likely raise the issue.

Suggested Points to Raise

¶11. (S/NF) Kuwait's leadership will want to hear from you primarily on Iraq, Iran, and issues related to the U.S.-Kuwait strategic relationship. The following are some suggested points you could raise on these issues:

Iraq:

- Thank Kuwait for its continued support
- Encourage Kuwait to publicly support Iraqi Vice President Tareq Al-Hashimi's reconciliation efforts
- During discussions with First Deputy Prime Minister, Defense Minister, and Interior Minister Shaykh Jaber Mubarak Al Sabah encourage GOK support for and assistance in securing the delivery of commercial fuel to the GOI
- Be prepared to discuss the tone in Washington DC as Congress prepares to debate the issue of troop withdrawal
- Be prepared to discuss the Petraeus/Crocker report (released on September 15)
- Be prepared to discuss plans to mitigate British redeployment in Southern Iraq

Iran:

- Reassure the GOK that there are no plans to invade Iran
- Reassure GOK of U.S. commitment to diplomatic solution
- Highlight U.S. preparedness to ensure Gulf security
- Highlight U.S. concerns about Iranian activities in Iraq and the use of Iranian weaponry against American soldiers
- Recognize Kuwait's efforts to support UN resolutions (1737 and 1747) and encourage them to continue to enforce them actively

U.S.-Kuwait Strategic Relationship:

- Express appreciation for Kuwait hosting and support of U.S. forces
- Emphasize the importance of the bilateral relationship and strengthening overall Gulf security
- Acknowledge that we recognize the strategic importance of Kuwait and look forward to continuing high level visits

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